

that there's a process where we can collaborate and share information in a very transparent way, which I think will be beneficial. And I would hope that the Russians would see the meetings as beneficial and out of the meetings realize our true intent, and hopefully design systems that protect us all.

President Parvanov. I would like to begin by saying that we welcome the strategic dialog, and it was described as a strategic dialog by both leaders, both by President Bush and by Putin, a dialog which started within the framework of G-8. We Bulgarians would accept any solution that would provide more guarantees, more security guarantees, more guarantees of the indivisibility of the security of the Euro-Atlantic space—any solution that has been achieved, hammered out through dialog and in transparency, and any solution that is not directed against a third country, notably Russia in this case.

I would take the liberty of paraphrasing something that was said in Prague—hopefully my source was reliable; the President would correct me if I'm wrong or imprecise—the Bulgarians must not choose between their friendship with the United States and that with Russia. The Bulgarians should and can maintain friendly relations with both countries. Just as I am a friend with George and a friend with Vladimir, we could maintain, within the context of our Euro-Atlantic orientation, friendly relations with both without diluting the things, without losing sight of our strategic priorities. We should maintain relations with everyone who thinks likewise.

This means the same approach would apply to the energy, the infrastructure sphere. This is why Bulgaria maintains—has maintained active relations with Russia on the major infrastructure, or rather energy projects.

I myself, earlier today, offered to President Bush a clearer, firmer commitment by American companies to the energy project. Chevron, in respect of Bourgas-Alexandroupolis, or AMBO—I'm not going to list them all here—this is an investment in peace and the security of the region. This is a geostrategic contribution. And I'm saying this both as the President of Bulgaria, but also as a citizen

of the Balkans, a region for whose fate and future I feel responsible.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:35 a.m. at the National Museum of Archaeology. In his remarks, he referred to former President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process of Kosovo. President Parvanov and some reporters spoke in Bulgarian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by President Georgi Parvanov of Bulgaria in Sofia

June 11, 2007

Mrs. Parvanova, Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, members of the Government, and distinguished guests: Laura and I are thrilled to be with you, and we're really happy to be in your country.

You know, sitting here in this beautiful museum reminds me of the great history of Bulgaria. And it was important for me to be with leaders who are still writing a history of this important country. And for a person who was raised in the deserts of Texas, this is a magnificent view. It reminds me of the beauty of your country. I was telling the President, my only regret is that we didn't have this meeting on the beaches.

I congratulate you on your admission into the EU. A lot of people said, there is no way that Bulgaria can do the necessary things to join the EU. And you proved the critics wrong. We're proud to be a member of NATO with you. Bulgaria is a valued ally of all of us in NATO and a valued ally of the United States.

I thank you for your strong stand for freedom. I thank you for helping spread liberty into places like Iraq and Afghanistan, where people want to live a peaceful and free life. I appreciate the sacrifices the people of this country have made to support the troops and their families. I firmly believe that the actions we're taking are laying the foundation of peace for generations to come. I think people will look back at this moment in history and say, thank God there were people who still

stood strong for liberty and freedom as the alternative to tyranny and oppression.

We discussed a lot of issues. I appreciated your leader's advice on Kosovo. It's important advice, and I took it seriously. Kosovo must be independent. And I thank them for their advice as to how to best achieve that.

I made it clear the visa policy needs to be changed. And I care deeply about the Bulgarian nurses. We're working on a strategy to make sure that these nurses come home as quickly as possible.

We had a constructive, candid, important conversations today. Our friendship is strong, and we intend to keep it that way.

So I'd like to propose a toast to the President, his good wife, to the people of Bulgaria, and to the friendship between the United States and Bulgaria.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:36 p.m. in Sunny Hall at the National Museum of History. In his remarks, he referred to Zorka Petrova Parvanova, wife of President Parvanov; Prime Minister Sergei Stanishev of Bulgaria; and Georgi Georgiev Pirinski, chairman, Bulgarian National Assembly. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Parvanov.

Remarks at the American University in Bulgaria in Sofia

June 11, 2007

The President. Well, listen, thank you all for introducing yourselves. I want to thank you very much, Olga, for giving me a chance to visit with these students.

First of all, I'm looking forward to hearing about your stories and your dreams. There's no question that education is what's going to help change the world; it certainly change your personal lives. But it also has the opportunity to change regions in the world. And I am excited that all of you have had a chance to go to higher education and that you aspire beyond your current education to achieve new things, new dreams—Michigan State Law School—I mean, Michigan Law School, excuse me, or mathematics. I mean, it's uplifting for me to be with you.

America strongly supports education initiatives at home and abroad. I think the best

thing we can do is to invite students to come to our country. You'll see what America is really like when you come. But you don't have to, you know, just come to America to study. You can study all over the world, and then go back to your countries and become productive citizens and apply what you've learned and help your countries grow, because the potential in this part of the world is wide open. We kind of have to do a little political work in some places, but it's wide open. And we wish you all the very best. I'm honored to be with you.

Stanko, why don't you share some thoughts with us.

Stanko Stankov. Well, I have to—I mean, I agree with the point about education. There are many challenges here in the region, especially after Bulgaria now entered European Union. And this period of transition, I think, is going to be best dealt with by having a good education and having competent people who can stand up to the challenge and just face it the proper way.

The President. So, Stanko, what was your major?

Mr. Stankov. My major was business administration.

The President. Oh, that's right. Yeah. And so what are you going to do?

Mr. Stankov. Oh, first I'm going to do some work here in Bulgaria, because I need some work experience before I apply to a grad school in the United States—that's where I hope to apply. And after I do this work for 2 or 3 years, I'm going to go probably to the States and study, do my masters there. And after that, well, we'll see.

The President. And have you found a job?

Mr. Stankov. Yes, I'm being interviewed still. And tomorrow I have a very important interview. [Laughter] My next job interview. [Laughter]

The President. Well, if the interviewer is listening—[laughter]—Stanko is looking for a little work. [Laughter] It'll make your mother happy when you find a job, won't it?

Mr. Stankov. Yes, she will be happy.

The President. That's good. Well, thank you very much, Stanko. Thank you all.